

Iguana Report from Japan

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November, 18, 1996

Iguanas in Japan

From the end of 80's to early 90's, there was a little reptile boom in Japan. Many shops were constructed and other non-reptile shops, including department store, tropical fish shops, and even some super markets, started to sell small cutie iguanas. Number of imported juvenile iguanas had increased rapidly through 1992 to 1993 (cf:fig1). As compared with increasing number, the costs of iguanas decreased in a short period. In around 1990, one juvenile was about 30,000 yen(about \$300) to 40,000 yen(\$400). At 1992, it dropped to 10,000 yen(\$100). Last year, it dropped to around 3,000 yen(\$30). It be-

came 1/10 in 5 years. We don't think it is a bad thing to sell in a lower cost but there are some people who thinks it is an awful thing to use more money to create their environment than the animal price. Of course it takes more than \$30 to make their good circumstances.

And \$30 is cheap enough for the elementary school children to buy iguanas as a toy. We have seen many children buying them in the pet shops.

Problem here was, there were no information for proper iguana care. There were No books, No magazines, No veterinarians specialized for exotic animals. Different explanations are heard if you ask different people. Most shops described as

follows.

"Iguanas are easy to keep."

"Iguanas eats anything."

"They don't grow big."

"Keep them in a 20 deg (Cen-tigrade) environment."

"60cm aquarium is enough."

All these non-academic expressions were heard from many pet shops. And since there

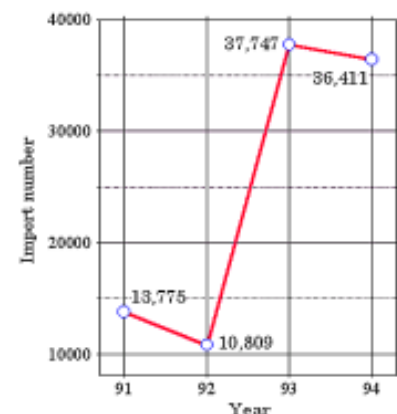


fig 1

Import number of juvenile iguanas in Japan. From 1991 to 1994. There was a great boom in 93.



Rescued juvenile iguanas : They were all depressed and suffering from Metabolic Bone Disease(MBD). They were fed only in lettuce and no direct sun light.

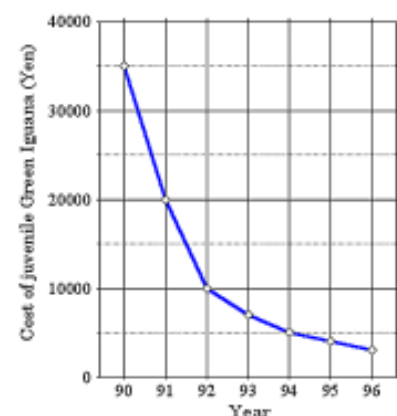


fig 2

Cost shift of one juvenile Green Iguana. It became less than 1/10 in five years. It is now 2,000 to 3,000 yen.

are no other information, people had to believe these wrong description. We heard that less than 10% would survive over an year. Thirty thousand iguanas are imported now, but we have hardly seen iguanas those are over 1m.

Every time we go to pet shops, we encounter poor looking suffering iguanas. Most of them are Metabolic Bone Disease. Many people didn't know the necessity of sun-bathing and some didn't even know that they need a heater. There were many respiratory infected, parasite infected, paralyzed limb, MBD juvenile iguanas all over. At one shop, with worst condition, we couldn't leave them and we bought them all. They all recovered and we are now keeping 14 iguanas in a small apartment. But there are more out there. We had to do something for these poor iguanas.



First iguana book in Japan. "Iguana iguana iguana : How to love your iguana". Written all in Japanese. 146 pages, over 100 photographs. Akira & Takako Yamanouchi. ISBN 4-88023-044-8 C2076 P2800E.

Yamanouchi Iguana Laboratory

In order to save all suffering iguanas in Japan, We started my one room laboratory called Y a m a n o u c h i I g u a n a Laboratory (YIL). First of all, We had to study. Since it is impossible to get information here, We made a contact to a book shop in America and bought all books and academic paper related to iguanas. We were very surprised to find so many iguana books published in States. And October of 1995, we published the first iguana book in Japan. It is called "Iguana iguana iguana : How to love your iguana". It is the first and only iguana book now in Japan. Many people were waiting for this kind of book. After working for the publication, we started a Q&A FAX service. We get 4 to 5 questions per day constantly. We found out that many people were suffering from lack of information. We are not veterinarians, but many veterinarians are included in these questioners. We are expecting for Japanese veterinary medical technology to raise.

Most frequently asked questions are about their food. Most people, including shop owners and veterinarians, believes that iguanas are carnivorous when youth and changes to herbivorous when they grow up. We had a hard time explaining that they are herbivorous all through their life time. Many keepers are giving dog foods or cat foods. We had to stop them immediately.



Yamanouchi Iguana Laboratory's Home Page. You can see our latest report from Japan. Mostly written in Japanese but some pages are in English. Of course photographs are international! Please visit us.

Another problem was, there are no Full-spectrum (FS) light maker in Japan. Only FS lights we can find are all imported and very expensive. We wrote a letter to FS light maker in America that we are having difficulty to get UV radiating light for our reptiles. This company was very kind and offered us that we can sell their lights in a reasonable cost. This offer also saved many iguanas.

From February, 96, we also started an Inter-net iguana home-page. Anyone can have an access and get all kinds of latest information about iguanas. We can count over 1500 access per month to my pages and getting 5 to 6 question mails per day. We are feeling more reality of saving iguanas in Japan. We will continue this service as long as we can. YIL home page address is;

<http://www.sagami.ne.jp/yama/>

Some pages are readable to English speaking people.

Reproduction

On 2nd of this March, our female iguana "Oberon" (Female rescued from the worst shop, recovered from MBD) laid 26 eggs. But only 5 eggs were fertile. We made a self-made incubator and incubated for 3 month at temperature 28 to 29 degree (Centigrade).

On 19th of May, one of them hatched. We guess this is the first regular succession report of iguana reproduction in Japan. The hatchling named



Egg laying female. They didn't like the egg laying site we prepared (Sand box). They just laid all over the room.



Eggs were incubated in a self-made incubator. Environment was kept in a 29 deg. temperature.



First egg hatched. They don't have any fear to human from birth.

"Bingo", had SVL of 77mm, tail length 220mm, weighted 15 grams. It was a lot bigger than we were thinking. We couldn't believe she was in her 35mm by 24mm oval shell. She must be tangled up in there. Although she was energetic, she had right eye problem. She can open only half of her right eye eyelid.

On 3rd of June, second egg hatched. Named "Eve", had a

completely premature birth. She came out with huge yolk-sack which it should had been absorbed before birth. Her skeletal system was underdeveloped and her eyes were bulging outwards. She looked just like a mantis. And she has an eye sight failure. She weighed only 12 grams at birth. Her surviving possibility seemed very low.

But under special care,



Hatching iguana : After 3 months' of patience, we got our special gift. This baby took 4 hours to come out.



"Eve" came out with her huge yolk sack. She was completely premature and seemed not to survive. This yolk sack dropped off next day.

both Bingo and Eve survived. They both are very tamed from birth and sleeps in our hands. Extremely CUTE! We found that iguana's fear of human comes from acquired process. They are natural born human companion!

There are up to date Bingo & Eve report and photographs on our Inter-net "News" page. It may take a time to download for there are lots of pictures, but we think they can come up to your expectation. Please visit us when you have time.
http://www.sagami.ne.jp/yama/yil/news/news_e.htm

Draco

From January, 97, we are starting a bi-monthly magazine



The hatchling had some physical problems. Since it was a premature birth, her skeletal system was underdeveloped that she hardly could walk and her eyes were bulging out for her skull was too small and soft.



After 2 months' special care, she survived. Her eyesight had not recovered yet but has great appetite. (Eating hibiscus flower)

related to reptiles. Again, this will be the first reptile magazine in Japan. It will be called "DRACO" and will be sold through petshops and book store.

Many people keeps reptiles hiding, sneaking, trying to avoid from their neighbor to know you are keeping them, etc. They are still minor pets.

But not from now. We are going to change this situation. They should be recognized as a companion. They must be treated same as dogs and cats, or even more. We are trying to appeal this thoughts to public through our magazine. I want to tell many people that they are lovable creatures. We hope these thoughts of saving animals will spread out to all mankind.

We have to know that this earth, this world, this environment is not only for human. These are my main policy as an editor.

We are still far behind from you, but we will try to catch up. We hope this action will save more reptiles in Japan. We want to think this is our mission.

**Our life is
dedicated to
Iguanas!**

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Special Thanks to;

Robert Ehrig
Breck Bartholomew
Brian Hardin
Marie Eguro
Henry Lizardlover
Kelly Nolan
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